

February 24, 1951.

Mr. R. P. Levine,
Division of Botany,
University of California,
Los Angeles 24, California.

Dear Paul:

I am happy to see the materialization of your interest in working here. You are quite right- arrangements would have been very much simpler three or four weeks ago, but there's no reason to be pessimistic of the possibilities now.

To take up the simplest questions first: I take it that your wife has applied for an assistantship (teaching or research?) in the Zoology Department here. I do not know of a single good student here who has had the slightest difficulty in finding support. There are a great many assistantships floating around. In case the formalities have not been considered, I am enclosing an application form for her which should be returned to Professor H. R. Wolfe as Chairman. With apologies for late filing, I think that such an application would still be considered, if it had not already been submitted. The department is quite strong, and I think your wife's fields of interest are probably well covered, but a glance at the graduate catalog would tell the most.

As to the problems I had in mind, I would not wish to specify them too closely, as you will want to plan the details yourself. The main point is that I have been looking, quite successfully, for new isolates of *E. coli* which can be crossed. Some of the problems which come up now include a) microbial antagonisms [colicins and phages] as isolating mechanisms on the one hand, and as selective agents for sexual progeny on the other; b) the taxonomic classification of the coliform group on a genetic basis, i.e., to determine which of the current diagnostic characters are trivial single gene differences, and which represent more complex adaptations so as to deserve specific rank, and c), perhaps the most interesting experimentally, to look for genetic divergence, i.e., whether similar functions in different strains are under the control of similar genes. If you can visualize the opportunities for the analysis of the natural differences between distinct forms through the availability of a crossing technique, you will see what I have in mind. On the other hand, there are innumerable other problems possibly less germane to your training, but in the formal, physiological, or cyto-genetics of bacteria which remain to be tapped.

Now for the toughest question: finances. The possibility which I mentioned in my letter of last December was an item in the budget of an NIH research grant, which was submitted some time ago. I have every expectation of its approval, but have had to commit part of those funds elsewhere. Perhaps I misunderstood your letters, but I had the impression that you were likely to be awarded a fellowship from the PHS or NRC, and that you were holding off to see whether you would go to Italy or not. For this reason, I have not tried to make any special provision for a salary for you. I would appreciate it if you could clarify your own current position and expectations in regard to fellowships. It should certainly not be too late yet to apply for a PHS postdoctoral fellowship to work here, if the basis for your discouragement was the international climate. It is unfortunate that you did not apply for the Merck fellowship, which is specially designed for straddling two fields as we are now discussing.

You will note that all of the possibilities I have been discussing concern extra-institutional support, either as a direct fellowship to you, or via a research project grant. I am afraid that there is very little likelihood of an institutional appointment at the present time, for the same general reasons which have dried up the market generally. However, the tenure situation is probably not intolerable; our program is closely enough aligned with AEC, Chemical Corps and similar defense lines that competent professional personnel are not going to be lost for lack of funds. If you can find a fellowship for the first year, and if everything works out to our mutual satisfaction in the lab, I don't think there will be any difficulty in budgeting your salary with reasonable promotions, for an additional year or two. But such grants have to be planned well in advance, and I would prefer not to have to go back now for extensions.

If none of the above-mentioned possibilities are still open, however, I still may be able to go to the foundations or ONR etc., with a program that would underwrite your salary. Without tenure, the title of your post is a (non)academic question, but it would be either Project "associate or Research Associate, depending on points too complex to write here.

Please send me your instructions as soon as possible, viz., whether you are interested in pursuing the matter; if so, whether you have reasonable prospects of fellowship support, or can develop them; and finally, if I do have to write a new program for additional extra-institutional support, what aspect of the subject should be emphasized, and what you would regard as a) a minimum, and b) a reasonable stipend for the academic year 1951-52. [Living costs here are roughly comparable to Berkeley, except rents which are 10-20% higher here.] If you have any concrete preferences or distastes for sources of support, you might mention them also.

Sincerely,

Joshua Lederberg